

The Missouri Overweight and Obesity Observer

Published by the Section for Nutritional Health and Services

A compilation of the latest news relating to overweight and obesity from around the state, nation and world.

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NOTE: Some web pages may have expired since news pages are updated so frequently.

Obesity costs near smoking

Healthcare costs stemming from treatment of illnesses related to obesity are taking a similar financial toll as those from smoking-related diseases, according to a *Washington Post* report. Americans and their government are paying an estimated \$93 billion a year.

Overweight and obese individuals can expect to pay 37 percent more for healthcare than people of normal weight. This amounts to an average of \$732 more a year per person, a new analysis, underwritten by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, found.

These figures back up what doctors have been saying for a long time concerning the rate of obesity's close ties to the increase in healthcare costs. Obesity should be targeted as aggressively as smoking, the authors of the analysis concluded.

For full story, go to: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A51654-2003May13.html>

Health head wants healthier menus seen in restaurants

In an effort to combat obesity-related costs and deaths, U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson has challenged restaurants to do "what's right" by changing their menus to promote healthier lifestyles.

"We are asking the fast food industry and all of the restaurants to start looking at their menus and see if they can diversify and put healthier foods on there and help to promote them," Thompson said in a CNN interview recently.

Citing that the incidence of obesity has increased more than 50 percent, Thompson said that two-thirds

of Americans are overweight or obese, and 15 to 20 percent of children fall in that category. He announced a new grant program to "encourage states, cities and other local government agencies to propose innovative, community-based programs to prevent diabetes, asthma and obesity."

One in five adults very active

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has released a new report that shows about one in five American adults engage in a high level of overall physical activity, including both activity at work and during leisure time. At the other end of the spectrum, about one in four American adults engage in little or no regular physical activity.

Among the other findings of the report was the fact that education seemed to predict a higher level of activity among adults with the most educated being the most active. Similarly, the ones who earned the highest incomes were also the most active.

The survey, conducted among 32,000 adults, also revealed that a higher percentage of white adults engaged in a higher level of activities (20 percent) than did Hispanics (15 percent) and African Americans (14 percent).

For full story, go to <http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2003pres/20030514.html>

Oreos are target of latest suit against trans-fatty foods

Oreo cookies are the subject of a suit filed recently by a San Francisco attorney who claims he is doing the public a service by drawing people's attention to the fact that trans-fatty acids are unhealthy.

According to an editorial opinion column in USA Today recently, the attorney, Stephen Joseph, joins a growing number of attorneys who are seeking to "turn

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Big Food into the next Big Tobacco case.”

The column writer, however, claims, “Unlike tobacco, food processors generally have been responsive to new health findings.” The writer also points out that the “medical warnings about food additives are murkier than about tobacco.”

Nutrition experts sought for dietary guidelines committee

Every five years since 1980, The U.S. departments of Health and Human Services and Agriculture have published Dietary Guidelines to assist Americans in taking advantage of the latest research when planning their meals.

This year nominations are being solicited for prominent experts in nutrition and health to assist in the preparation of the 2005 Dietary Guidelines. Deadline for submission of nominations is June 16, 2003.

For full story, go to <http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/>

Eating out while staying true to goals of healthy eating

According to a report from the Mayo Clinic, eating more healthfully doesn't confine you to eating at home. You can eat nutritiously away from home, too. Numerous tips are offered including requesting a take-home box and dividing your meal in half before you begin eating.

You don't have to limit yourself to standard American cuisine when eating out. You can eat a healthful meal at ethnic restaurants as well. As with American foods, the problem to sidestep is excess fat and sodium.

The report offers tips on what to eat and what to avoid when eating particular ethnic foods including Italian, Chinese, Mexican and Japanese.

For full story, go to <http://www.cnn.com/HEALTH/library/HI/00021.html>

USDA's fruit and vegetable pilot program deemed success

Almost all schools participating in USDA's fruit and vegetable pilot program consider it to be very successful and would like the pilot to continue.

The Nutrition Title of the 2002 Farm Act provided \$6 million to the FVPP for the 2002-03 school year to improve fruit and vegetable consumption among the nation's schoolchildren.

For full story, go to <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/efan03006/>

Obesity drug reduces weight and cuts heart disease risk

An obesity drug, which works by hindering the body's ability to absorb fat, is twice as effective as dieting in reducing weight in obese patients and cuts their risk of heart disease, according to new results from a long-running study.

In the longest clinical trial to assess the effectiveness and safety of an obesity drug, patients taking the drug had fewer symptoms of metabolic syndrome — a cluster of three or more factors that increase the risk of heart disease. Those factors include obesity, high blood pressure, early indications of diabetes, abnormal cholesterol levels and high waist measurement — or typical beer belly.

For full story, go to http://www.msnbc.com/modules/exports/ct_email.asp?news/920088.asp

Whitehouse wants new diet guidelines, updated pyramid

The White House Office of Management and Budget wrote the Agriculture and Health and Human Services departments recently urging them to revise current guidelines to distinguish between harmful trans fats that increase the risk of heart disease and beneficial fats such as omega-3 that can lower the risk.

The Food Guide Pyramid, which has not been updated since 1992, is also under scrutiny and stands to be revised.

For full story, go to http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2003-05-28-food-pyramid_x.htm